

ISDA Animal Identification Steering Committee
Meeting
Friday, December 10, 2004
9 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
Idaho State Department of Agriculture
Lower 1 and 2 Conference Rooms

Those present:

Glenn Alves, GA, Inc.	Judy Bartlett, Farm Bureau
Representative Darrell Bolz	Michael Coe, Global Animal Management
Linda Cope, ISDA	Linda DuBose, Caine Veterinary Teaching Center
Jim England, Caine Veterinary Teaching Center	
Jeff Heins, DVM, IVMA	Dan Hinman, Idaho Beef Council
Rex Hoagland, Swift & Co.	Dr. Debra Lawrence, ISDA
Earl Lilley, Idaho Horse Council	Jim Little
Lindsey Manning, Shoshone-Paiute Tribes of Duck Valley	
Jay McCown, Biomark Livestock	Toni Meeuf, ISDA
Sean Merrill, Merrill's Eggs	Julie Morrison, Idaho Cattle Association/NWPP
Mark Owens, Biomark Livestock	Rochelle Oxarango, Idaho Wool Growers
Beth Patten, SCFMA	Gary Penny, ISP Brand Inspectors
Dan Schiffler	Dr. Clarence Siroky, ISDA
Jennifer Smith, ISDA	Rick Stott, NWPP
Brad Thornton, Idaho Pork Producers	Amy Van Hoover, ISDA

Dr. Siroky opened the meeting. He urged everyone to contact Idaho's Congressional delegation to express the importance of confidentiality.

Dr. Siroky said the states are the "referees" for information. ISDA has the burden to verify and pass information to USDA. States will retain more information than USDA. The Uniform Methods and Rules (UM&R) is 75% complete.

Regarding funding, Dr. Siroky said that over the next few years \$33 million is projected but that it won't pay for the entire system. The public's reaction to the NAIS is to ask "what's in it for me." Dr. Siroky said that animal identification is an insurance that everyone must pay for. 48-hour traceback lessens the economic effects from disease outbreak. He asked the group to think about outreach methods.

Michael Coe gave up update on premises registrations. The USDA's system handles registrations for those locations that have a 911 address. About 50% of the brands database has this, so approximately 15,000 premises are ready. USDA is moving its servers to Kansas City by the end of December. The federal system is up now but the agency is still testing systems.

Lloyd Knight said that he'd received questions about their premises being registered. People don't seem as concerned with the benefit; they are concerned with confidentiality and have questions about why people aren't being notified. He suggested ISDA communicate about the animal identification program: who, what, where, and why premises are being automatically registered. ISDA should explain its process, as people have assumed the national program is voluntary but they're being registered without even being told it's happening.

Michael Coe said that there are no cattle premises registered unless owners have volunteered to do so. Cervidae farms are in the database, although not all of them. His company is waiting for ISDA to give orders on this.

Dr. Siroky said the message from this group should be what to say to people. He asked for help on making an education and information plan. He wants people to come to meetings. Meetings usually start with people's questions and producers end up answering along the way through the meeting.

Lloyd Knight said suggested a letter from the department explaining what was happening. He asked if confidentiality was certain. Dr. Siroky said the attorneys thought so. Dr. Siroky added that the database could be used to send disease information to producers.

Lloyd Knight asked if there were changes needed this legislative session. Dr. Siroky said that the NAIS won't be mandatory for 4 years.

Jim Little said he agreed that ISDA should send a "heads up" letter about the database. Dr. Lawrence agreed. Dr. Siroky said that he could do this using the brand database addresses. Dr. Lawrence suggested ISDA put a premises registration application in the packet. Michael Coe said extra information from producers would be good for Idaho's system. If they don't have a 911 address, GPS coordinates could be used. The only numbers in the state database are for elk and about 5 cattle operations that have asked for it. Dr. Siroky said he would write the letter in the next 2 weeks and wanted to know whether an educational plan should be with the letter.

Julie Morrison said that NWPP was getting calls; ISDA needs to tell people the information is already stored in the brands database. Gary Penny said the brands database information is all public record. Dr. Siroky said that once the information from brands is in ISDA's database, it is no longer public. Judy Bartlett suggested ISDA send its letter to organizations as well. Dr. Siroky said that brand owners, dairies, veterinaries, meaning everyone who would get a premises number, would get a letter. Jim England commented that this list should include sale barns.

Mark Owens talked about his company, Biomark Livestock, and its role in ISDA's project. Biomark doesn't make tags and readers; they design systems. He gave a background on RFID and explained that there is a unique number that is only activated by a reader. Treasure Valley Livestock's system is automatic; it even has solar capabilities and wireless communication to the data unit. Biomark tried to keep the cost down, yet create a system that was easy to operate and ready for use. He told the committee that tags must fit the reader.

Jay McCown talked about a new facility to accommodate the Biomark system. Treasure Valley can route animals through the system before the arena.

Mark Owens said Treasure Valley Livestock's system wasn't metal, that a wood frame was necessary. He showed pictures of the system.

Jim Stewart said that one reader would be inadequate for a slaughter plant and asked how Biomark would address this. Mark Owens explained that the animals must be single file. The pilot program can help to figure out solutions to the issues. He said there would be an American Falls system soon with panel readers. He said he needs industry comments. Jim Little asked about other technology. Mark said that there is active RFID, retinal scan and others from various companies.

Gary Penny asked if the standards were addressed in the rules and Dr. Siroky said they were. Jim Little commented on tag orientation for sheep. A flat panel wasn't good for the orientation problem. Roxanne Oxarango said it was hard to keep the animals going and to keep them in single file. Mark talked about a round chute. He also talked about how hard it was to identify bison. He said issues would be tested in the pilot project.

Gary Penny asked for an explanation about why metal wouldn't work with the systems. Mark said that iron and steel can reflect, redirect, and cause a decrease in read distance. Two feet is generally necessary. There were other questions from the committee members. Mark explained that an antenna is a loop, with different gauge wire. The power plants on the Columbia have shielding technology. Design depends on the individual site. Jim Stewart commented that metal doesn't interfere at his dairy.

Julie Morrison gave a handout with an update on NWPP. She is going to cattle association meetings and has talked to more than 1,100 producers, government entities, and the press from papers everywhere, even international. People are asking plenty of questions and wanting to sign up. Over 100 producers have signed up and NWPP's database is almost ready. It should be ready in early January. It will be available on the web site so people can enter their own transactions.

Dr. England talked about the University of Idaho's project. His plan is to determine what is needed to make the system work – when to tag cows and when to tag calves to work with production. Issues determined include how to use the equipment in extreme weather conditions, what technologies will work, and how to get systems to talk to each other.

Dr. England explained that he is trying to identify retention rate; appropriate place for tags so they can be read easier; reader interferences; tag failure rate; reader compatibility; whether the tag applicator for all tags is the same; and how the tags react to cold or hot weather. Tag loss is 0.05%. He has 1,500 identified to tag. He is trying to develop the process on when and how to tag.

Mark Owens told everyone that there is a computer system being used to track tag failure or system failure. Dr. England will work with Biomark on this idea.

Lindsey Manning suggested a test of individual ear tags versus implants. Dr. England replied that his project was looking at visual and electronic tags being used together. No implants were being used as of yet. Dr. England said that Treasure Valley Livestock is not tagging yet. They will bring in test animals once the system is up and running. Mark Owens said they needed to evaluate compatibility between all visual and electronic tags, that it was critical to the success of the project. Beth Patten asked if implants migrated. Dr. England replied that they all migrate to some degree. Dr. Siroky added that there had been an experiment with goats and sheep. The implants were placed near the tail. The experiment yielded good results. Jim England discussed various species.

Mark Owens said there was a new tag frequency that fits ISO standards.

Dr. Lawrence said there were 3,000 tags and replacements for the feed lot. The heifers would be tagged soon. She said the project involved cattle for the most part. The project needs more dairy, hogs and sheep.

Toni Meeuf said she was setting up a billing system.

Dr. Lawrence said she was encouraging input for llamas and other species.

Dr. Siroky told everyone of several issues: outreach needs, rules, information technology issues, and funding. There will be additional cost for brands and personnel. No one can answer the questions as to cost yet. USDA will pay for the database and some state administration. There is \$205,000 ongoing within the state, which covers three positions. He mentioned general fund monies. There would be information technology costs for individual transactions, data storage, and generating reports. ISDA needed more personnel or it would have to outsource some of the work. Idaho is using Global Animal Management. He brought up the concept of charging a fee for registrations and suggested linking the fee to brand registrations. A proposal could be made for the next legislative session. He suggested this proposal could be drafted by the Rules Subcommittee.

Four subcommittees were formed: Education, Information Technology, Rules, and Emerging Issues.

Jim Little told everyone that the economic opportunities associated with animal identification are unknown and that this is an important message.

Jim Stewart said people didn't understand the needs for premises identification: when to register and when to record movements. He said the committee needs to figure out when the program will be mandatory, as this will either kill or help the project. If there is no movement event, no information would need to enter the database. Producers have fears that need answered.

Dr. Siroky told everyone that this is an animal health issue.

Jim Stewart said the issues are confidentiality and telling people when the need to register their animal.

Rochelle Oxarango asked if Ag Stats information could be used. Dr. Siroky said ISDA can't send information out using that information.

Jim Little asked how packing houses would work. Jim England answered that some plants have already been researched.

Rochelle Oxarango asked if there were different rules for each state. Dr. Lawrence answered that the national traceback system is the same. Beth Patten asked if this meant working backwards: from packer to feed lot to producer.

Dr. Siroky said that the different production segments have varying information technology needs.

Jim Little asked about sheep and pork, economic competitive ability, and how electronic i.d. is addressed.

Dr. Siroky discussed different scenarios for various species and which sorts of transactions that group/lot identification were appropriate for. He said if you know the animals came from one entity, then group/lot identification was sufficient. Jim Little asked how you would handle stray lambs at the market. Dr. Siroky said the system wasn't like Europe's, which requires 100% identification. That system costs \$30/head. The U.S. system would require about 80% identification.

Jim Stewart told everyone that when people understand the process, they will report transactions because they won't want the responsibility for that animal. It will take the burden away from the producer. This is an important message for outreach/education. People need to be able to dial up and drop the information into a database.

Gary Penny asked about reporting. Would everyone take feedlots' word? Would a government entity need to be onsite for every transaction? If so, this would be expensive.

Jim Little asked when country of origin and animal identification would be in effect. Dr. Siroky said it might be as late as 2008. He said that fees could be charged for premises identification.

Rochelle Oxarango said that sheep producers already have a number and they might not want to pay again.

Gary Penny said the only funding for brands came from fees. No general funds are used. The system will cost extra. Lindsey Manning said the consumer always pays in the end. Dr. Siroky said that industry had to back use of general fund monies. Lindsey Manning suggested a separate subcommittee for in charge of "sustainability".

Dr. Siroky said he thought there were 30,000 premises.

Darrell Bolz told everyone that fees would be a big debate for the Legislature and that the committee needed to determine the final cost as soon as possible.

Toni said that USDA would want a “Sustainability Plan”.

Gary Penny said that it would be less political if industry backs funding.

Dr. Siroky talked about the subcommittees. The next meeting was set for February 11, 2004 and a list of tasks will be distributed to the subcommittee members soon.

Dr. Siroky adjourned the meeting.